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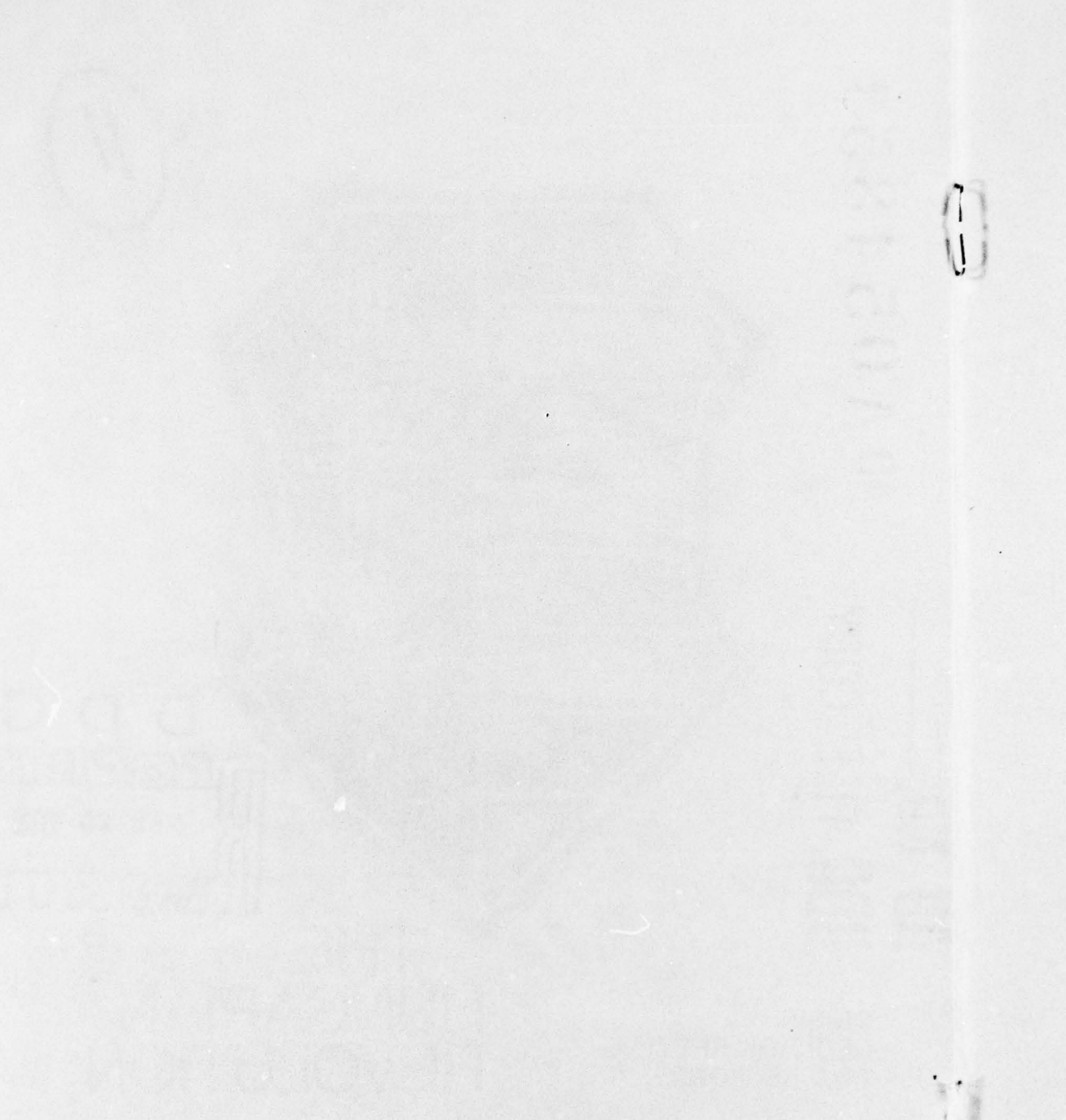
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CRISIS  
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# THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

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**About the Cover:** The cover is an artist's depiction of the Kossuth Coat of Arms. Used as Hungary's national symbol since the revolution of 1848, it was replaced by a Soviet emblem after World War II. Hungarian freedom fighters revived the symbol during the 1956 revolution.

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**CRISIS DECISION SETTING AND RESPONSE:  
THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION**

by

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Ernest A. Nagy  
Department of State

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**NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS MONOGRAPH 78-1**

**NATL-SEC-AFFAIRS-MONO-78-1**

11

March 1978

12 39p.

**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY  
RESEARCH DIRECTORATE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20319**

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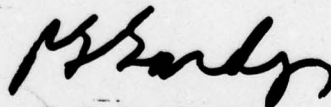
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## FOREWORD

This essay was among those originally collected as case studies to support a study in crisis management being written within the Research Directorate of the National Defense University.\* As research and drafting of the study progressed, it was decided that special case studies were needed specifically to conform with the overall conceptual framework of the study and to illuminate its conclusions. It was felt, however, that this essay, because of its quality and subject interest, should be published separately to support the University's continuing interest in the subject of crisis management and decisionmaking. Other case studies are in preparation, written by both students and faculty of the University.

In addition to a simple historical accounting of the where, when, what, and how of a particular event, case studies in crisis management should provide their readers with a better understanding of their handling through the descriptions presented of the forces, conditions, and atmosphere around which the events and decisions took place. For this is the environment—the decision setting—wherein the tough search for alternatives takes place.

→ In this essay the author focuses on the issues and atmosphere that faced the leaders in the Kremlin in late October-November 1956 as the Hungarian Revolution gathered momentum—prompting them initially to make concessions and later revoking them, and intervening with force, as actors and conditions, many beyond Hungarian control, created the setting for the revolt's death knell. In this essay a common element found in all international crises is apparent: the impact on world history of current decisions made by the various actors. As the author compellingly leads the reader to contemplate, was the crushing of the uprising by the Soviets inevitable or, given altered acts of commission and omission by the West, might not the response and outcome have been different?

↑  


R. G. GARD, JR.  
Lieutenant General, USA  
President

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\*Frisco W. Short, Richard G. Head, and Robert C. McFarlane, *Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decisionmaking in the Mayaguez and Korean Confrontations* (To be published in cooperation with The National Defense University by Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.)



### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Ernest A. Nagy is a foreign service officer and a graduate of the Class of 1972-73 at The National War College, where he wrote *The Hungarian Revolution* as a student research paper. He was born in New Jersey and served in the US Army Medical Corps in 1946-47. He joined the Foreign Service in 1952 and was assigned almost immediately to the US Embassy in Budapest. In September 1956 (6 weeks prior to the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution), Mr. Nagy was reassigned to the United States, only to return quickly to Europe (Salzburg) to help with the Hungarian refugees flooding into Austria. Prior to attending The National War College, he served tours in Berlin, Copenhagen, and in the Pentagon with the International Security Affairs Directorate in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Mr. Nagy is currently assigned as Labor Attaché in the American Embassy in Rome. He is not related to the late Imre Nagy, Prime Minister of the Hungarian Government during the short period of the revolution.



## THE DECISION SETTING

### The First Day—October 23

The Soviet Union was deeply involved in the Hungarian Revolution virtually from the outset. What had begun, on October 23, 1956, as a demonstration on behalf of a series of reforms and in sympathy with developments in Poland had, through the stupidity of the Hungarian Communist leadership and the lethal intransigence of the Security Police, escalated into an increasingly serious insurrection. Within 36 hours of the first fatality, the Hungarian Communist system was almost totally abandoned and defenseless. The massive, pervasive edifice, constructed and painstakingly nurtured by the Soviets and their Hungarian disciples throughout the previous decade, collapsed unmourned. The Hungarian Army had either joined forces with the demonstrators or stood aside passively or benignly.

The shock waves set in motion throughout the Soviet Empire by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February 1956, had swept over Hungary as well. Criticism of the ramifications of Stalinism in Hungary, muted at first, increased in intensity as 1956 wore on. Pressures for the application in Hungary of the reforms of the Twentieth Congress culminated in June with the ouster from power of the Hungarian Stalin, Matyas Rakosi. While he was not replaced by Imre Nagy, as many might have wished, and was, in fact, succeeded by the dour Erno Gero, a pale copy of Rakosi, the simple fact of Rakosi's deposition was in itself heady stuff. Events in Poland had resulted in the ouster of the Polish Stalinists and, on October 19, the ascension to leadership of Wladyslaw Gomulka. Observing these events, Hungarian intellectuals and students in the forefront of the discussions precipitated by the debeatification of Stalin were in no mood to settle for Gero.

The Polish developments were followed with particular interest in Hungary. Whereas there is, for reasons of historical geographic proximity, no love lost between Hungary and her immediate neighbors, throughout Hungary's millennial history Poles and Hungarians have reciprocated affection and respect. This relationship was personified by the Polish General Joseph Bem, a hero of both the Polish Revolution of 1830 and the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49. Bem had been the particular idol of the Hungarian patriotic poet Petofi, whose name was widely invoked during the ferment of the summer and fall of 1956. Thus, there was a kind of inexorable historical symmetry in the decision

of the students, intellectuals, factory workers and others to demonstrate on October 23 on behalf of their "sixteen points" before the statue of Joseph Bem.<sup>1</sup> These sixteen demands had been worked out the previous night at a meeting held in the Budapest Technical University.<sup>2</sup> The petition was distributed throughout the city by handbills. Simultaneously, other similar meetings were convening, resulting in similar demands. The last prerevolutionary issue of the Communist daily *Szabad Nep*, in its October 23 edition, published the ten demands worked out by the Petofi Circle, a writers' group.

Permission for the demonstration at Bem's statue had been granted by the Ministry of the Interior. At around noon, the radio announced that the permit had been rescinded. This caused great consternation, resulted in hurried meetings throughout the city and in the sending of delegations of protest to Party headquarters. When it became evident that the Technical University group was bent on convening at the Bem statue in defiance of the ban, the Ministry of Interior again reversed itself and condoned the event.<sup>3</sup> The radio also announced that, at 8:00 that evening, Party First Secretary Gero, newly returned from a fence-mending trip to Belgrade, would broadcast an important speech.

Hours before the Bem demonstration was due, thousands were gathering at various significant sites throughout the city. A large crowd went to the Petofi statue, where an actor passionately recited Petofi's fervent poem, "Arise, Hungarians!" This crowd then joined others in converging on the Bem statue, in Buda, across the Danube from Parliament. As the crowd swelled, the shouts were increasingly bold. Anti-Soviet slogans were added to the "sixteen points" and the other parallel demands. Cries for the return to leadership of Imre Nagy grew in intensity. The square before Parliament became the next rallying point. Here the crowd demanded to hear Nagy. At length, the Party functionaries approved his appearance. Unprepared and in an ambiguous position with respect to the Gero regime, Nagy gave a maladroit talk which did little to appease the throng.<sup>4</sup> It was, perhaps, the beginning of the problem which plagued Nagy throughout the revolution, namely, his need to catch up with the revolution and its aspirations.

Gero's heralded speech at 8:00 p.m. proved to be the one act sufficiently stupid to pull the trigger. In remarks which resounded with the despised Stalinist rhetoric, Gero pledged to crush all attacks, from "whatever quarter they may come," against "the achievements of our People's Democracy." The demonstration was referred to as "enemy attempts to heap slanders on the Soviet Union." He branded as "an impudent lie" any suggestion that the Soviet Union was not trading with

Hungary on an equal footing.<sup>5</sup> So incendiary to the occasion was the speech, in fact, that one might have been justified in considering it to be a planned provocation, analagous to the Reichstag fire.

The city and nation were incensed. In Budapest, thousands were still on the streets. A few people suggested going to the radio station to demand equal time to broadcast the demands of the various demonstrators. The small group was followed by thousands of others. It was here that the first shot was fired. Although accounts differ as to the exact circumstances of the first shots, all versions agree with the central finding of the UN Special Committee on the Problem of Hungary which established that the shots were fired at the crowd, from within the building, by the Security Police, the AVH.<sup>6</sup> It was here that the unarmed demonstration was transformed into an armed revolt. Before the night was out, fighting was widespread through the city and Stalin's massive likeness had been sent crashing to the ground and dragged through the city's streets.

The Hungarian Communist Party's Politburo was in session throughout that turbulent night. At the center of the discussion was a debate as to whether Soviet forces should be called on to help in quelling the growing disturbances. It is not entirely clear whether the Politburo decided formally to solicit such aid. Gyorgy Marosan, a Politburo member, subsequently boasted that he had called for Soviet help, but this may well have been a self-serving assertion. General Bela Kiraly, who became the commander for revolutionary forces in Budapest, testified before the UN Special Committee that "on October 23 Erno Gero applied for Russian military aid, but this measure was kept secret."<sup>7</sup>

In any event, before that fateful night was out, Imre Nagy found himself catapulted back into the premiership. We now know that Gero, on October 25, tried to get Nagy to sign an antedated document asking for Soviet military assistance. The implication was that Nagy, confronted with a *fait accompli*, should accept the responsibility for it. Nagy is said to have made no oral response; he took the papers, at the bottom of which his name was already typed for signature, and put them in his pocket.<sup>8</sup>

In the UN General Assembly on November 19, 1956, Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov quoted a telegram which he claimed to have received from the Hungarian Prime Minister on October 24, asking the Soviet Union to send troops to Budapest to put down disturbances. He omitted, however, identifying this Prime Minister. One may rightly ask, in any case, how Soviet tanks could arrive in Budapest by 2:00 a.m. on



October 24 in response to a request received in Moscow on the same day, for by that hour Soviet tanks were engaged in trying to suppress the growing insurrection.<sup>9</sup>

(At the outbreak of the uprising, two mechanized Soviet divisions, the 2d and 17th, were stationed in Hungary, together with some additional military units. The Soviet 32d and 34th Mechanized Divisions stationed in Romania entered Hungarian territory on October 24.<sup>10</sup> Most of these forces were employed in fighting the insurgents in Budapest and its environs; the rest took up positions in the provinces.)

#### October 24

Early on October 24, Radio Kossuth in Budapest announced that Imre Nagy had been appointed Prime Minister. Within the hour, the radio announced that martial law had been imposed. A few minutes thereafter, the announcement was made that the Warsaw Pact had been invoked and the Soviets called upon to restore order. The announcement, at 9:00 a.m., stated that an armed attack of "counter-revolutionary gangs" during the night had created an extremely serious situation and that "... the government was unprepared for these bloody and dastardly attacks, and has therefore applied for help to the Soviet formations stationed in Hungary under the terms of the Warsaw Treaty."<sup>11</sup>

This sequence of announcements had the effect of tarring Imre Nagy with responsibility for the announced measures. This appearance was doubtless calculated by Gero and his clique in order directly to discredit Nagy. Nor was Nagy helped by the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe. *Egyetemi Ifjusag*, a Hungarian publication put out by university youth, wrote on October 29th that Radio Free Europe had added to Nagy's credibility problem by broadcasting that "it was Imre Nagy who had called in the Soviet troops," whereas in fact "it was Andras Hegedus (Nagy's predecessor as Prime Minister) who called them in on Tuesday night (October 23)."<sup>12</sup> It can be argued that Nagy, in subsequent days in attempting to clear his name, came to overstep the limits allowable by the Soviets. In any event, as soon as he became Prime Minister, Nagy's popularity waned perceptibly. Because it was assumed he had called in the Russians, the situation was poisoned to such an extent that a peaceful solution was obviated for the next few days while Nagy attempted to establish his credibility.

It was a feature of the Hungarian Revolution that even when the right steps were taken, they were taken too late. Had Nagy been pro-



claimed Prime Minister 24 hours earlier, bloodshed might have been avoided and the dynamics of the situation might have been channeled into the path successfully followed in Poland. The situation might even have been saved had Nagy, following his elevation, been allowed to speak candidly to the people and place the responsibility for calling in the Soviet troops on the shoulders of his predecessors. By the time the true facts became generally known, it was much too late to turn back to the incremental improvements which the Polish solution offered. By then, pitched battles had been fought, innumerable lives lost, vast destruction incurred and passions and emotions massively engaged.

At around 2:00 p.m. on the afternoon of October 24, Soviet tanks appeared before Communist Party headquarters on Akademia Street. Out climbed Anastas I. Mikoyan and Mikhail A. Suslov, both Deputy Premiers of the Soviet Union. They were the Kremlin's Hungarian troubleshooters, having been dispatched to Hungary on the occasion of earlier problems. Now they encountered despair and bickering among the various factions within the Politburo. Reproaches and counter-accusations were being exchanged between Gero and his Stalinist confederate, and the moderates led by Imre Nagy and prominently including Janos Kadar.<sup>13</sup> Mikoyan was beside himself with anger. He excoriated Gero, blaming him for all that had happened, both because of his speech of the night before and for his decision to call in Soviet troops. In this latter connection, Mikoyan's wrath spread to Soviet General Tikhonov as well; Tikhonov was the local Soviet counterespionage chief, and it was he who had responded favorably to the call for Soviet troops.<sup>14</sup>

That Mikoyan shouted at Gero, and generally treated him with utmost rudeness and contempt, was not surprising, if somewhat unusual. Whereas the Soviets generally maintained pretenses with respect to the sovereignty of the satellite nations, there was never any doubt as to the subordinate role all satellite leaders played with respect to the Soviets. The circumstances under which Rakosi was summoned to Moscow, in the wake of the 1953 uprising in East Berlin, are illustrative. When Rakosi balked at the Soviet demand that he divest himself of his role as Prime Minister and retain only the position of Party First Secretary, Beria is reported to have said:

Listen, we know there have been in Hungary, apart from its own rulers, Turkish sultans, Austrian emperors, Tartar khans and Polish princes. But, so far as we know, Hungary has never had a Jewish king. Apparently, this is what you have become. Well, you can be sure we will not allow it.

The discussion among the Soviet leaders which followed resulted in the designation of Imre Nagy as the new Prime Minister. The Hungarian delegation, including Rakosi, unanimously approved.<sup>15</sup>

While this wrangling was going on in Mikoyan's presence, Imre Nagy prepared to make his first speech to the nation as Prime Minister. This would be an opportunity to restore confidence in constituted authority and put a rein on the hostilities which were increasingly threatening to provoke massive Soviet retaliation. Nagy insisted in vain that he be permitted to explain his innocence in the calling for Soviet troops; that he would otherwise be unable either to restore order or establish confidence in himself. Mikoyan and Suslov were adamant. For reasons that are unclear, they insisted that absolutely no mention be made of this subject.<sup>16</sup> Thus, although Nagy's speech promised democratization and reforms in the political and economic system, most of the audience was more impressed by what was unsaid. They could not but conclude that Nagy had in fact called in the Soviet forces, and continued to rely on them to master the situation.

#### October 25-29

Gero's total dethronement was sealed by the bloodbath which occurred before Parliament on the morning of October 25. A massive crowd, which had assembled demanding to hear from Nagy, was suddenly fired upon from the surrounding rooftops. Soviet tanks, which had peaceably accompanied the crowd, first responded to the fire from the rooftops. Then doubtless thinking themselves to have been ambushed, they began firing indiscriminately. According to eyewitness accounts, perhaps as many as 200 persons were killed on the spot. On the reasonable assumption that the rooftop malefactors were members of the Security Police, subsequent lynchings of AVH personnel could be traced at least partly to the public outrage generated by the Parliament massacre.

This event was the last straw for the Soviet emissaries. Shortly afterward, Gero's ouster was announced, together with Kadar's succession to the top Party post. Gero sought, for the next 24 hours, to turn the tide, hoping for a reversal of the verdict by Moscow. Finally, he and the deposed Prime Minister, Andras Hegedus, were spirited away in a Soviet tank to Czechoslovakia, and later forwarded to the USSR.<sup>17</sup>

In quick succession, Kadar and Nagy went on the air. Kadar had little of interest to say, giving a sketchy picture of the situation in stilted terms. Nagy, on the other hand, spoke more encouragingly. He

no longer referred to "counter-revolutionaries." He promised that the government would be reformed along pluralistic lines. Most important, he announced that "The Hungarian Government is initiating negotiations, . . . on, among other things, the withdrawal of Soviet forces stationed in Hungary." Still, though this speech held much of promise, its effect was partially vitiated by his reference to the Soviet troops "whose intervention in the fighting had been made necessary by the vital interests of our socialist order."<sup>18</sup> Things were going too far too fast for the masses to accept such statements.

President Eisenhower issued a statement on the 25th which deplored the intervention of Soviet military forces in Hungary, which "should have been withdrawn" under the provisions of the peace treaty. "The heart of America goes out to the people of Hungary," the President said. He characterized the demands being made by the Hungarian people as "clearly falling within the framework" of those human rights offered by the UN Charter and specifically guaranteed by the peace treaty.<sup>19</sup>

The Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov, questioned by reporters at a diplomatic reception in Moscow that evening, admitted ". . . there have been difficulties in the material situation of the (Hungarian) population. There have been bureaucratic methods of administration, and there is demand for democratization." He referred to "demonstrations" in the past few days; ". . . some can say they were counter-revolutionary elements."<sup>20</sup> All things considered, this was a measured, even conciliatory description of events by the Soviet Foreign Minister. It certainly indicated that, for publication at the very least, there was something less than total determination on the part of the Soviets to crush the revolution at this stage.

For the next couple of days, Mikoyan and Suslov held long conferences with Nagy and others, resulting in a meeting of the minds. So far as one can judge, the Soviet leaders had in mind the achievement of a solution along the lines of recent developments in Poland. That is to say, there would be limited democratization, economic liberalization, some relenting in the pressure on agricultural collectivization and, probably, the reduction if not total withdrawal of Soviet forces. On the other hand, the Communist Party, with due allowance for a unique Hungarian flavor, would remain in charge, headed by men in whom the Kremlin trusted and relied. On Friday, October 26, while street fighting continued between "Freedom Fighters" and Soviet armored units, Mikoyan and Suslov departed as they had come—by tank to Ferihegy



Airport, and on to Moscow to report developments at first hand to the Soviet Presidium.<sup>21</sup>

During the next couple of days fighting continued, despite efforts by the government to bring hostilities to a close through promises of amnesty and the institution of desired reforms. Russian tanks streamed continuously through the streets of Budapest, while the burned-out hulks of others began to proliferate throughout the city. Scores of corpses were lying in the streets. Nevertheless, optimists thought not in terms of military victory for the Revolution, but rather for the achievement of desired aims at the political level.

The most stubborn and persistent area of organized revolutionary resistance was centered on the Kilian Barracks. The 1,200 men and boys behind the compound's thick walls were commanded by Colonel Pal Maleter, a Hungarian tank commander. On the 24th, he had been dispatched to quell the revolutionaries in the 8th and 9th Districts of the city. By his own subsequent testimony, he quickly determined that those he had been ordered to subdue were "loyal sons of Hungary fighting for their freedom." In common with so many other military commanders, though far more effectively than most, Maleter joined the revolution. Unbeknownst to Nagy, plans had secretly been drawn up by the Soviets, in collaboration with some members of the newly organized Hungarian Government, to storm the Kilian Barracks on Sunday morning, October 28. Nagy learned of the plans virtually at the last moment. In the post-revolution "White Book" putting forth the Communist interpretation of events, one may read that Nagy ordered a halt to the plans half an hour before the attack was to begin. Nagy thereby saved many lives and averted considerable bloodshed.<sup>22</sup> More important, he had taken a giant step in the direction of being overtly committed to the principal aims of the revolution.

Later on the 28th, Nagy delivered yet another speech on Radio Kossuth. It represented a major effort to identify the government with the revolution. No longer were his listeners addressed as Comrades and little remained of the Communist jargon which had annoyed listeners in some of his earlier remarks. He announced an immediate and general cease-fire. Better still, he stated that "... the Hungarian Government is initiating negotiations to settle relations between the Hungarian People's Republic and the Soviet Union, including the question of the withdrawal of Soviet troops stationed in Hungary."<sup>23</sup> He also announced the abolition of the hated AVH and the reorganization of the police.



That night, a special session of the UN Security Council was called. It was the first Sunday session since June, 1950. The Hungarian question was placed on the agenda at the insistence of the United States, United Kingdom, and France under Article XXXIV—" . . . situations endangering international peace and security." The USSR, in response, invoked Article II which prohibits interference by the UN in the internal affairs of a member state. While the USSR was outvoted in this contest, they simply vetoed the adoption of the provisions of Article XXXIV. All that emerged from the session was an expression of sympathy from the Western powers. In Hungary, however, news that the UN had taken up the Hungarian issue had an initially electrifying effect on the populace. Foreign newsmen in Budapest filed numerous stories dwelling on the great expectations placed by the Hungarian masses in the prospect of UN action.

The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Budapest, the agreement concerning which had been proclaimed by Nagy on October 28, actually began that evening and continued apace on the 29th. *Szabad Nep*, now firmly in the hands of the revolution and of the government, which were becoming more nearly synonymous, proclaimed in a lead story on the 29th that this withdrawal " . . . is the first step towards their return to their bases, then to their final evacuation from national territory."<sup>24</sup> Imre Nagy's credibility was being restored as the fighting abated. Hostilities on the 29th were reduced to desultory skirmishes in Budapest and elsewhere in the country, coupled with the tangible withdrawal from the fray of Soviet units.

Evidences of Soviet troop withdrawals proliferated throughout the 29th. Radio stations around the country, such as "Radio Free Gyor" in the West, coupled these reports with admonitions to the populace not to provoke Soviet troops during this move so that armed clashes could be avoided.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Radio Kossuth in Budapest said that insurgents were beginning to hand over their arms to Hungarian troops as part of a coordinated plan to restore tranquility concurrent with the Soviet withdrawals.

There were other reports as well, however. John MacCormac, writing for the *New York Times* on the 29th, reported that "The seventh day of the Hungarian revolution has dawned with Soviet soldiers still patrolling Budapest streets despite a promise by Hungary's new government that they would be withdrawn." MacCormac also reported that the adjournment of the UN Security Council on the 28th without even adopting a resolution about Hungary "appeared to come

as a shock" to informed circles in Budapest. Furthermore, "... all along the revolutionaries have voiced dismay over failure of the West, and particularly of the United States, to give them any real help." He added that the Hungarians "... still have a touching reverence for everything American, but it seems doubtful that this will last much longer."<sup>26</sup>

The Soviets officially maintained they were becoming disengaged. At a reception at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow that evening, Marshal Zhukov denied to journalists that any new troops had been sent to Hungary in the past 24 hours, "... nor in the course of the last 64 hours either." The current number of troops now present was sufficient, he said, but the situation was improving: "A government has been formed which is enjoying our support and the support of the Hungarian people." When asked whether the Warsaw Pact applied to internal as well as external matters, Zhukov replied that this had been wrongly interpreted in the Western press; that "... the provisions of the Warsaw Pact also apply to internal aid."<sup>27</sup>

#### **The Crucial Day—October 30**

Tuesday, October 30, was both the apex of the Revolution and the day on which its doom was sealed. Evidences of Soviet troop withdrawals from Budapest abounded, and their movement toward the Soviet frontier was broadcast by various Hungarian sources. Before the day was out, fighting had virtually ceased throughout the country. Imre Nagy, now firmly determined to keep pace with events, and doubtless hoping thereby to be able to restrain them within bounds tolerable to the Soviets, announced the abolition of the one-party system. Former democratic parties, forbidden heretofore, were called upon to reconstitute themselves. A Cabinet reshuffle was announced; a number of prominent non-Communist personalities were introduced into the government. Free elections were promised.<sup>28</sup>

Mikoyan and Suslov had returned to Budapest, bearing a gift that exceeded the hopes of the most audacious optimists. They brought an official declaration by the Soviet Government regarding relations among Socialist states. The statement, which was broadcast later in the day by Radio Moscow and printed in *Pravda* on the following day, declared the willingness of the Soviet Government to discuss with the satellites the question of Russian troops stationed on their territory. The statement admitted "downright mistakes" in Soviet relations with the Socialist nations, and "... violations and mistakes which infringe the principles of equality between sovereign states." The Soviet Govern-

ment had given orders to its commanders in Hungary to withdraw Soviet troops from Budapest as soon as the Hungarian Government desired. "At the same time," the statement went on, "the Soviet Government is prepared to engage in negotiations with the Hungarian People's Government and the other signatories to the Warsaw Pact regarding the question of the presence of Soviet troops elsewhere on the territory of Hungary."

This document, quoted in full in the Appendix, is a critical one in attempting to assess the Soviet role and Soviet motivation in the Hungarian Revolution. In view of subsequent events, some will be tempted to dismiss it as an exercise in duplicity. Certainly, Soviet treachery in various aspects of the Hungarian events is readily adduced. In this case, however, coupled with Khrushchev's descriptions of the travails experienced by the Soviet Presidium, the evidence suggests that the Soviet move was a genuine one. For one thing, the entire sequence of events was a sore trial to Soviet ideological concepts. Even the distorted descriptions that Soviet Ambassador Andropov might have been relaying to Moscow must have revealed the virtual unanimity of the Hungarian people. The very fact that the Soviets were doing all the fighting in attempting to suppress the uprising was powerful evidence that this was a genuinely popular expression of will. Finally, it is difficult to imagine so shrewd and experienced a Bolshevik as Mikoyan forming any but a hardnosed impression of what was going on, based on his first-hand observations.

In brief, I believe that the Soviet leaders, as of the morning of October 30, were determined to make considerable concessions in order to contain the Revolution, and retain Hungary within the Soviet orbit, even if in substantially altered circumstances and with considerably loosened ties. It has been argued that Imre Nagy's abolition of the one-party system, with all that it implied for the demise of the Communist Party, was a fatal step because it was unacceptable to the Soviets. It is certainly true that free elections would have been a very bitter pill for the Soviets to swallow. However, these points were still subject to negotiation, as part of the *quid pro quo* in the promised negotiations over the removal of Soviet troops. Nagy's October 30 statement was, at least for a brief time, a real cause for rejoicing. The revolution was victorious!

The elation of the Hungarian Government and people, and the benign vibrations emanating from the Kremlin, proved short-lived. Within a few hours of the arrival of Mikoyan and Suslov and the Radio Moscow broadcast of the Kremlin's *mea culpa*, the British Prime Min-



ister, Anthony Eden, and the French Premier, Guy Mollet, revealed to their respective Parliaments the joint undertakings of the two nations, in tandem with Israel, against Egypt and the Isthmus of Suez. This announcement was made while the Soviet Presidium was in session. As far as it is possible to judge, it was in these meetings of the Presidium that the decision to crush the Hungarian Revolution by force was made.

Khrushchev's account of some of the episodes of this period contains some classic samples of historical revisionism. The description, as offered in *Khrushchev Remembers*, contains egregious distortions of fact. Still, it can be instructive to read Khrushchev's account of the deliberations within the Soviet inner circle over the problem. In view of the ideological whitewash Khrushchev smears over many of the events of the revolution, it is reasonable to conclude that his account of indecision within the Presidium is an accurate reflection of what happened there since his account of these deliberations does not support his simple evaluation of the events.

We may quickly dismiss Khrushchev's labels, which come right out of the dialectic handbook: for counterrevolution, read revolution; for proletariat, read Communists (virtually an extinct breed in Hungary within hours of the Revolution's inception), and so forth. However, his account of the tremendous indecision within the Presidium rings true. Since he might be expected to minimize the factionalism within the Presidium, we may confidently conclude that what actually transpired was considerably more heated and tortured a debate than Khrushchev's account indicates, that he has condensed and watered down that aspect of the events though he felt unable to deny it completely.

Picking up Khrushchev's account, he writes:

This was a historic moment. We were faced with a crucial choice: Should we move our troops back into the city and crush the uprising, or should we wait and see whether internal forces would liberate themselves and thwart the counterrevolution? If we decided on the latter course, there was always the risk that the counterrevolution might prevail temporarily, which would mean that much proletarian blood would be shed. Furthermore, if the counterrevolution did succeed and NATO took root in the midst of the Socialist countries, it would pose a serious threat to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania, not to mention the Soviet Union itself.

We asked Mao Tse-tung to send a representative to consult with us about the events in Hungary. The Chinese responded quickly. A delegation led by Liu Shao-chi flew in. Liu was a man of great experience and prestige, much respected by us. . . .

Our consultations with the Chinese were held at Lipky, which had formerly been one of Stalin's dachas and is now a rest home. We sat up the whole night, weighing the pros and cons of whether or not we should apply armed force to Hungary. First Liu Shao-chi said it wasn't necessary; we should get out of Hungary, he said, and let the working class build itself up and deal with the counterrevolution on its own. We agreed.

But then, after reaching this agreement, we started discussing the situation again, and someone warned of the danger that the working class might take a fancy to the counterrevolution. The youth in Hungary was especially susceptible.

I don't know how many times we changed our minds back and forth. Every time we thought we'd made up our minds, about what to do, Liu Shao-chi would consult with Mao Tse-tung. It was no problem for Liu to get in touch with him on the telephone because Mao is like an owl; he works all night long. Mao always approved whatever Liu recommended. We finally finished this all-night session with a decision not to apply military force in Hungary. Once we agreed on that, I went home. Liu and his delegation stayed at the dacha.

Later in the morning the Presidium of the Central Committee met to hear my report on how our discussion with the Chinese delegation had gone. I told them how we had changed our position a number of times and how we had finally reached a decision not to apply military force in Hungary. However, I then told the Presidium what the consequences might be if we didn't lend a helping hand to the Hungarian working class before the counterrevolutionary elements closed ranks.

After long deliberation, the Presidium decided that it would be unforgivable, simply unforgivable, if we stood by and refused to assist our Hungarian comrades. We asked Marshal Konev, who was the commander of the Warsaw Pact

troops, "How much time would it take to restore order in Hungary and to crush the counterrevolutionary forces?"

He thought for a moment and replied, "Three days, no longer."

"Then start getting ready. You'll hear from us when it's time to begin."<sup>29</sup>

Khrushchev goes on to relate how this decision was communicated to Liu Shao-chi, who was about to fly back to Peking. The entire Presidium went out to the airport to tell Liu the change in decision. He says Liu offered no arguments, said he thought Mao would support the decision, and departed.

Several points stand out in this curious narrative. The most obvious, of course, has already been touched upon, namely, the evidently intense and protracted division of opinion as to whether to intervene. In view of the fact that Malenkov, Kaganovich, Shepilov, Zhukov, Molotov, and Voroshilov were all soon to be purged from the ranks of leadership, one may fairly speculate that at least several of these were among those who opposed intervention. More recondite, however, are some other features. For example, Khrushchev's speculation on NATO taking root in Hungary suggests that the USSR had a real fear that the West might involve itself overtly in the Hungarian situation, and might present the Soviets with a *fait accompli*, i.e., "take root." There is also his charming warning that the working class might take a fancy to the counterrevolution, and that the Hungarian youth were especially susceptible.

Even more revealing is the "dovish" bias of the Chinese representative. Today, in the wake of President Nixon's visit to Peking and the general debunking of the formerly axiomatic view regarding the implacability of the Chinese Communists, this may not seem so surprising. However, we certainly would have been surprised in 1956 to learn that the Chinese were advocating restraint. As a matter of fact, one may well question whether the Chinese position was not merely an early symptom of the Sino-Soviet schism. Following the October 30 declaration of the Soviets, the PRC reacted quickly. Peking agreed with Warsaw and Belgrade that the Hungarians had justice on their side. Almost bluntly, the Chinese had accused the Russians of "bourgeois chauvinism" and of not taking into account the principle of equal rights in dealing with fellow Communist states. These errors, said the Chinese, had unfortunately "... seriously damaged the solidarity of the



socialist states and their common objectives." The Chinese stated their belief that relations among socialist countries must be based on the Five Principles enunciated at the Bandung Conference.<sup>30</sup> No doubt this outspoken Chinese position was a factor in splitting the factions in the Soviet Presidium debating the steps to be taken in Hungary.

Khrushchev cites no exact dates for the feverish deliberations of the Presidium. However, he notes that Mikoyan and Suslov were absent in Budapest. We know they arrived in the Hungarian capital on October 30, and departed again during the night of October 31-November 1. The internal evidence suggests that the final decision was taken upon the return of the two Soviet emissaries who doubtless brought with them reports of developments differing alarmingly from the mild deviations which had been permitted in Poland. Khrushchev also makes no mention of Suez in this context, but this could hardly be expected in view of the rigid, ideological explanation he offers of the events.

While the Soviet Presidium was determining Hungary's fate, in internal debate and in consultation with the Chinese, the negotiations between Nagy and his confederates and the Soviet team of Mikoyan and Suslov went well. The Hungarians gave assurances that they had no intention of following an anti-Soviet policy. Mikoyan appeared to agree to each of the points raised by the Hungarians: the formation of a multi-party regime; the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary; and the possible withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. He declared that the Soviet Government had faith in the Hungarian leaders, and assured them the Soviet Government took very seriously its declaration of October 30. All Mikoyan asked was that the gains made under socialism be protected, that the old regime not be permitted to return to power, and that Hungary must not become an anti-Soviet base.<sup>31</sup>

#### October 31

Late on October 31, the Soviets departed Party headquarters, climbed into a Soviet tank which took them toward home. Whatever they agreed to with the Hungarians, and whatever their sincerity may have been in the matter, they doubtless reported a series of major changes to their colleagues in the Kremlin: a rebirth of political democracy; the almost complete disintegration of the Communist Party; and a Prime Minister evidently intent on forming a coalition government independent of instructions from Moscow—all this, plus the desire to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. The firsthand report of these changes doubtless influenced the Presidium in its decision to crush the Hungarian upstarts.

On the 31st, Nagy finally announced to the nation his innocence in the decision to call in Soviet troops. "Before history, and fully conscious of our responsibility," the radio announced, "we herewith declare that Imre Nagy had no knowledge of these decisions. Imre Nagy's signature is neither on the resolution of the Council of Ministers asking for Soviet military aid, nor on the decree proclaiming martial law." The blame was laid squarely at the feet of Hegedus and Gero, "... who bear full responsibility before the nation and before history."<sup>32</sup>

That same day, Soviet evacuation of Budapest was completed. However, there now began a series of ominous reports of contrary Soviet troop movements.

Some Soviet forces were leaving the country; others appeared to be making huge circular movements; still others were newly entering Hungary. These activities picked up on November 1st, the day on which Nagy finally declared Hungary's neutrality. Later that day, Nagy received Ambassador Andropov, informed him of Hungary's decision to become a neutral state, and gave notice of the immediate termination of the Warsaw Pact. Nagy also informed Voroshilov, nominally the Soviet Chief of State, by telegram of these decisions. He requested the initiation of negotiations without delay.

At first, Nagy was disinclined to credit the reports of reverse Soviet troop movements. He preferred to believe they were simply part of complex maneuvers involved in leaving the country. From this point on, however, increasingly despairing warnings began reaching the Prime Minister. A veritable flood of Soviet troops was rolling back into Hungary in tanks and trucks, bringing with them artillery and ammunition. Units were seen to be digging in, both around Budapest and elsewhere throughout the country. The airfields were being encircled by Soviet tanks. The evidence could not be ignored. Still, Nagy ordered a blackout of all news of an alarming nature.<sup>33</sup> He clung to the assurances received from Mikoyan and Suslov that no new Soviet troops would be sent into the country. It would be useless to upset the people just when calm had finally been established. Incidents with Soviet troops could have disastrous results. Newly promoted General Maleter, the hero of Kilian Barracks and now Deputy Defense Minister (and soon to be Defense Minister), replied in a restrained manner at a press conference regarding Soviet troop movements, calling them illegal but insisting that Hungarians would behave "in a mature manner" and expecting the Soviets to live up to their agreements.<sup>34</sup> He and others banked on these moves being merely remnants of orders which predated the Mikoyan-Suslov agreements, and that the Soviet communica-

tions had not yet corrected orders to military commanders. Finally, however, Nagy summoned Ambassador Andropov, asking urgently for an explanation. Andropov said he would try to find out.<sup>35</sup>

Soviet troop movements were not the only problem being faced by the Nagy Government. Nagy had only now begun to catch up with the revolution. There was still considerable residual suspicion of him and his cabinet, particularly in the hinterland where news of his government's evolution was perforce less precisely reported. In addition, revolutionary groups in the countryside were particularly aware of the threatening Soviet troop maneuvers, the Soviets having virtually removed themselves from Budapest. In consequence, nationwide strikes had been proclaimed with the aim of expediting the removal of all Soviet troops from the country. This strike call had originated in Gyor with a revolutionary group which had also constituted itself as a kind of rump regional government.

### November 1-3

On the morning of November 1, Nagy began negotiations with representatives of the various unions and revolutionary groups, with an eye toward bringing the strikes to an end and establishing national political unity. Difficulties immediately arose. Talks were postponed to 8:00 p.m. Finally, unanimous agreement to support Nagy and his efforts was reached. That night, Nagy slept at home for the first time in 8 days.<sup>36</sup>

At eleven in the morning, November 2, Andropov returned, offering the bald explanation that the troop movements were "completely normal." The airfield encirclements and the entrenchments were only to assure the safe evacuation of the wounded and the dependents. Nagy was stunned. He could only conclude that when the Soviets no longer took pains to be convincing, the beginning of the end was at hand. Clearly, the Kremlin had withdrawn its trust in him and had other procedures in mind.<sup>37</sup>

With Andropov standing by, the Cabinet conferred. One after another, the Cabinet members agreed to demand immediate withdrawal of the newly arrived troops. None was more vehement in this approval than Janos Kadar. When the Soviet Ambassador was summoned to hear the government's position, Kadar asserted: "I am ready, as a Hungarian, to fight if necessary. If your tanks enter Budapest, I will fight them in the streets with my bare hands."<sup>38</sup> Within an hour, Kadar had dis-



appeared, not to re-emerge until after the Soviets had begun their final massive action to crush the revolution, and then as head of the new puppet regime.

What apparently happened was that around noon Kadar and one or two others left the Parliament Building and were driven to the Soviet Embassy in an official car. The chauffeur, ordered to wait, sat in the car for 11 hours. Finally, at around 11:00 p.m., he rang the bell at the Embassy and asked whether he should wait any longer. He was told he was no longer needed. The chauffeur reported these strange goings-on the next morning to one of the members of the Nagy Cabinet who, fearing Kadar and the others had been kidnapped, called the Soviet Embassy. He was given an evasive reply. In point of fact, Kadar and some other turncoats had been flown by the Soviets to Uzhgorod (Ungvar), capital of a former Czech-Hungarian area which the Soviets had annexed following World War II. It was there that the puppet regime was put together.<sup>39</sup>

Informed of Kadar's disappearance, Nagy was too preoccupied with a myriad of other matters to grant it much importance. The significance was not evident until the Soviet counterattack had begun. It is reasonable to conclude that Kadar was in close contact with the Soviets for some time. Most likely, he was selected as the likeliest instrument of the new Soviet policy which had been worked out during the stormy Presidium sessions of October 30-November 1. In any event, there is little doubt that it was not the Soviets who were acting on Kadar's request (as they later alleged as justification for the November 4 attack), but that Kadar was under Soviet orders and a creature of Soviet policy.

Following the demand levied on Andropov, and at about the time Kadar was vanishing, Nagy appealed by cable to Dag Hammarskjold. He asked that the matter of Soviet troop movements be taken up urgently in the UN General Assembly session about to meet on Suez. He further requested that the UN and the Four Great Powers recognize and protect Hungary's newly proclaimed neutrality. The diplomatic missions in Budapest were simultaneously informed by diplomatic note of these various steps. The Foreign Office in London announced it was studying the Hungarian note with care. A State Department spokesman had "no comment" on the note relayed from Budapest. The West was in no great hurry to alleviate the writhing in Hungary. The iron grip of Soviet forces tightened throughout the country. Alert to the gathering danger, the US Legation in Budapest began evacuating its women and children.

In the course of November 2, three more notes were delivered to the Soviet Embassy by the Hungarian Government. They asked for the initiation of negotiations, as proposed by the Soviets in the October 30 declaration, and protested the arrival of still more Soviet troops in Hungary. Early in the afternoon, a note arrived from Andropov, informing the government that demonstrators were threatening the Soviet Embassy. Unless order could be maintained, Andropov would be obliged to call for the help of Soviet troops. Alert to the implications, Nagy immediately dispatched General Kiraly, in charge of the defense of Budapest, to investigate. He reported back that, on his arrival, not a single demonstrator was in sight.<sup>40</sup>

Less than an hour later, another note arrived from the Soviets. The Russians agreed to begin negotiations along the lines requested by the Hungarians. The Soviet delegation would be headed by General Malinin, and would present itself at the Parliament for this purpose the following morning.<sup>41</sup> There was great joy at this word. Even those best informed of the Soviet troop dispositions seized upon this development as evidence that all was not lost. Elation was further heightened during the afternoon when word spread throughout the Parliament corridors, and from thence throughout the city and countryside, that a United Nations delegation was on its way to Budapest. It was even reported to be circling over Ferihegy airport, awaiting Soviet permission to land. Some lesser officials of the Nagy Government said calmly that they would soon land somewhere, and would make sure the Soviets kept their promises and withdrew in orderly fashion. Another version had the delegation diverted to Prague, from whence they were coming overland.<sup>42</sup> As a matter of fact, Geza Losonczy, a Minister of State in the Nagy Cabinet, stated in a press conference on November 2 that he had been informed of the arrival of a UN delegation from Prague, though he had not yet met with it. There was, of course, no UN delegation, then or ever, although Budapest never lacked for hopeful rumors of their impending arrival.

Victor Zorza, writing on November 3 in the *Manchester Guardian*, reported<sup>43</sup> from Budapest that:

The people here can understand why Moscow is delaying its reply (to the Hungarian request for Four Power recognition and protection of her neutrality). But why, it has asked, have the Western Governments not replied immediately that they acknowledge Hungary's neutrality? By delaying its reply, even for a day, the West is making things easier for Moscow. It is, in effect, countenancing the march of Soviet troops on Budapest. . . .<sup>44</sup>

The UN did take up the Hungarian question on November 2, but in the Security Council (where, of course, a Soviet veto hung over the proceedings) and not in the General Assembly which was meeting on Suez. The Soviet representative said reports of Soviet troop movements were "utterly unfounded." *The New York Times* reported that no decision had been reached at a 2-hour session of the Council and that a new session was set for the morrow in an attempt to decide on a course of action. The *Times* story expressed surprise that the US Representative, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., had no specific plan of action to present. The *Times* report stated:

It had been expected that the United States might put a formal resolution before the Council, which would almost certainly have provoked a Soviet veto, and then pass the question to the special emergency session of the General Assembly.<sup>45</sup>

Instead, Lodge asked the Security Council first "to establish the facts." The *Times* story concluded by noting that the Hungarian situation had been first brought before the UN on October 27. However, the major Western powers apparently decided "to let the matter rest temporarily while it was determined whether the anti-Soviet revolution had attained its goals or failed."<sup>46</sup> There was, of course, no commensurate rest taken in the Suez issue to see if the British, French, and Israelis had attained their goals or failed.

Around noon, on November 3, the Soviet military delegation appeared at the Parliament as advertised. The delegation was headed by Malinin, aided by Generals Stepanov and Shcherbanin. As the talks began, good progress was periodically reported to the journalists waiting outside. Agreement was reached on such issues as the appropriate formalities to attend the Soviet troop departure and the maintenance of Soviet military memorials and/or the repair of damage done to them. Agreement had not yet been attained on the final date for withdrawal: the Hungarians proposed December 15, the Soviets held out for January 15. It was agreed in midafternoon to adjourn and reassemble that evening at Soviet military headquarters in Tokol on nearby Csepel Island.<sup>47</sup>

That afternoon the Nagy Government held its first and last formal press conference. Nagy was absent "due to the pressure of business." The Cabinet members in charge tried to be reassuring, but were clearly worried. Pressed on the subject of Soviet troop movements, they could offer no explanation but promised to tell more the next day when the Maleter-Malinin talks might be expected to be completed.<sup>48</sup> That tomorrow never came.



The negotiations resumed at 10:00 p.m. at Tokol. Having conducted their first session under Hungarian auspices, it was a normal diplomatic courtesy to meet at Soviet facilities for the second session. By design or not, the time and place served to trap the military leaders of Hungary physically and the political leaders of both Hungary and the West psychologically. At about the same time that the military negotiators sat down for the second time, the Security Council met to discuss the Hungarian question. A US resolution that UN members furnish food, medicine and relief supplies to the people of Hungary "failed of immediate passage." Receiving assurances from the Soviet Ambassador that negotiations for Soviet troop withdrawals were proceeding at that very hour, which the Hungarian representative confirmed, the Council voted unanimously to postpone consideration of the Hungarian issue until 10:30 a.m. on November 5.

At Tokol, the atmosphere was cordial, even friendly. At 11:00 p.m., General Maleter telephoned General Kiraly in Budapest to tell him all was going well. Contact with the Hungarian delegation was maintained at periodic intervals until midnight, when the telephone connection was severed. A man in civilian attire, unknown to the Hungarian delegation, burst into the room accompanied by several armed men. He was General Ivan Serov, the Soviet security chief. He announced that the Hungarian delegation was under arrest. General Malinin protested forcefully, breaking into oaths.<sup>49</sup> After Serov took him aside and spoke with him briefly, however, Malinin gave orders for his delegation to leave with him. Maleter and his fellow negotiators were led away, ultimately to their execution in Romania.<sup>50</sup>

The Budapest reporter for *Politika*, the Yugoslav daily, filed a wrap-up story on November 3, which was printed the following morning. He wrote:

The sky above Hungary has been bright today: it was a sunny winter day. The atmosphere in the country, particularly in the capital, was somewhat in accordance with the weather. I think I would not exaggerate by saying that this Saturday has been the first peaceful day since October 23.<sup>51</sup>

#### **Russian Attack—November 4**

At around 4:00 a.m. on 4 November, 15 Soviet divisions with 6,000 tanks launched an attack on the largely unsuspecting country. Shortly thereafter, Imre Nagy came on the air for the last time:

Today at dawn, Soviet forces launched an attack against the capital with the obvious purpose of overthrowing the legal Hungarian democratic government. Our troops are fighting. The Government is at its post. I notify the people of our country and the entire world of these facts.<sup>52</sup>

Though fighting went on bitterly for days, and passive resistance for months, it was all over.

#### **SUMMARY: THE SOVIET DECISION AND WESTERN OPTIONS**

The Suez adventure is the key to the Soviet decision to crush the Hungarian Revolution. Although other elements contributed significantly, notably the rapid changes evolving in Hungary and the almost studied passivity of the West toward the Hungarian issue, Suez was the death knell.

First, the Suez action diverted the attention and energy of the Western powers, importantly including the United States, from the plight of Hungary. This diversion was almost welcomed with relief in Washington, where the Hungarian developments were painfully embarrassing. The incredible events had, in effect, called the bluff of the piously propounded policy of liberation. Confronted with this wholly unexpected event,<sup>53</sup> Washington seemed unable to affect the outcome favorably. Armed intervention was quickly ruled out. Not only was access difficult—being limited to air and complicated by the official neutrality of Austria, the nonalignment of Yugoslavia, and the hostility of the other states adjacent to Hungary—but also the prospect was unacceptable of a direct military confrontation with the Soviet Union on what, proclamations of a liberation policy notwithstanding, was acknowledged at Yalta and Potsdam to be Soviet turf. It is against this background that the Eisenhower Government turned with relief toward the problem of Suez. Here America's friends and allies were involved. Here the Government could righteously proceed with vigor.

Second, the Suez adventure relieved the Soviet Union of being the sole object of international obloquy. Despite appearances to the contrary, favorable public opinion is carefully sought after by the Soviets. As a recent example, one need but cite the easing of conditions under which the Soviets allow the emigration of Jews to Israel.\* There are sufficient additional examples to permit the conclusion that this was a major factor in the initial Soviet willingness to accommodate, within

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\*Editor's Note: Since early 1974, of course, the Soviets have considerably tightened restrictions on Jewish emigration from Russia.

limits to be sure, the aspirations of the Hungarian Revolution. Important among these considerations was the desire to avoid the appearance of acting as a brutal overlord in Hungarian affairs, to maintain the facade of a voluntarily united Communist camp which respected its own principles of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other nations. There was also the desire to appear to remain true to the new guidelines enunciated in February 1956 by the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Now, however, international censure was being shared with the British, French, and Israelis. Most important, the Soviets were able to mute any accusation of naked hypocrisy, as they demanded an end to the Suez insurgency. They were, after all, making common cause with the United States.

This turn of events, then, coupled with the escalating demands of the Hungarian Revolution, served to create an entirely new set of circumstances in dealing with the Hungarian problem. In that critical period, as October turned to November, Suez enabled the Moscow hawks to stage a decisive comeback and ultimately to prevail.

But the considerations within the Presidium must have been many. On the one hand, there was the desire to maintain the integrity of the Soviet empire and to offset the proliferating effect that a Hungarian defection would have on the other satellites—a Soviet “domino” theory. There were military/strategic considerations offered by Hungary’s geography and there was a probable need for Khrushchev in the wake of his controversial unmasking of the crimes of Stalin, to prove his Communist masculinity. And far from least, there was the moral smokescreen offered by the Suez situation—the Soviets doubtless regarded the UK/French/Israeli action, in part, as an exploitation of the Hungarian events.

On the other hand, there was the likely antagonism of world opinion, with its ramifications for Soviet trade, goodwill, and credibility, and for the Communist parties outside the Soviet bloc. Certainly there was a strong Chinese position against intervention. And in a more speculative sense we can but wonder if the selfish interests of Stalinist survivors, such as Molotov and Kaganovich, would stand to benefit from any disgrace which accrued to Khrushchev.

If Suez tipped the balance in the Soviet decisionmaking process, what step could conceivably have redressed this balance and salvaged the Hungarian situation? This is a critical question on which the tide of history has turned. Surely, if Hungary could have been pried loose from the Soviet empire, either under the Austrian formula (which the



Hungarians themselves favored overwhelmingly) or perhaps under circumstances analagous with Yugoslavia, subsequent history would have been much different. As it was, the doom of Prague in 1968 was sealed. The "Brezhnev Doctrine" was born on November 4, 1956, and Leonid Brezhnev had very little to do with it. When the USSR was able to crush the Hungarians with impunity, there was little reason to procrastinate over how to deal with Czechoslovakia.

I have always felt very strongly that the appearance in Budapest of the UN Secretary-General, or of a delegation under his instructions, during those critical days between the Soviet decision and its implementation, might well have been sufficient response to the posited question. Conor Cruise O'Brien, who represented Ireland in the General Assembly in 1956 and later was a key aide to Hammarskjold in the Congo, shares this view. He agrees with Hammarskjold that there was not a single member of the Security Council who felt it was a good idea to send the Secretary-General to Budapest, but he strongly disagrees with Hammarskjold's assertion that this left the Secretary-General no choice.

"From the point of view of his legal powers, there *was* certainly a choice," O'Brien has written. "The Secretary-General, under the charter, has powers of initiative in his own right. If he felt he could not go to Budapest himself, he could certainly have sent a senior Secretariat member, as he sent Ralph Bunche later to Elisabethville." O'Brien then develops a compelling explanation, based on the fact as he puts it, that "the Secretary-General was within the gravitational field of United States diplomacy":

The only reason that there was "never any choice for him in the matter" is that the United States government was strongly opposed to any such course. Imre Nagy became, posthumously, a hero of American propaganda but, while he was in power, he was a target of the same propaganda.

O'Brien recalls that in those critical 4 days there was intensive lobbying by the American delegates at the UN, "... warning delegates against any sympathy with the Nagy Government who were 'Communists of a particularly dangerous kind, with particularly bad records.'" It was only later that it became fashionable in the United States to blame the UN, and by direct implication, Hammarskjold, for "failure to act." O'Brien concludes by saying:

Hammar skjold understandably resented this for he had done what the Americans wanted, in playing down Hungary, and playing up Suez. It is true that he legitimately felt he could do something about Suez, and nothing about Hungary. The reason, once more, when you get back of it is that he was able to do what the Americans backed, and unable to do what they refused to back.<sup>54</sup>

Article 8 of the Warsaw Pact of May 14, 1955, provides that the signatories may not interfere in each other's internal affairs. Further, all parties to the Pact must be consulted immediately, and joint measures are to be taken, whenever the Warsaw Pact is invoked. In 1956, the Soviets acted unilaterally. In 1968, when it became Czechoslovakia's turn, they had corrected this error by nominally enlisting the support and participation of the other member states of the Warsaw Pact, including the minions of Janos Kadar's Hungary.

#### ENDNOTES

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2. David Pryce-Jones, *The Hungarian Revolution* (New York: Horizon Press, 1970), p. 61.
3. Tibor Meray, *Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959), pp. 71-72.
4. Endre Marton, *The Forbidden Sky* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), p. 124.
5. Vali, *Rift and Revolt*, p. 268.
6. The Security Police, or Allam Vedelmi Hatalom, were always referred to as the "ahvo," after an earlier acronym of the organization.
7. Free Trade Union Committee of the AFL-CIO, *Free Trade Union News*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (March 1957).
8. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 107.
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10. Imre Kovacs, *Facts About Hungary* (New York: The Hungarian Committee, 1958), p. 109.

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12. Ibid., p. 126.
13. Kadar, who was to become the Judas and Quisling of the Revolution, was himself a prominent victim of Stalinism. Imprisoned in 1951, he had spent 2 cruel years in prison where he is said to have suffered unspeakable tortures. He had been released during the earlier Prime Ministry of Imre Nagy, in 1954.
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15. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 9.
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18. Lasky, *Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 74-75.
19. Mikes, *Hungarian Revolution*, , p. 101.
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22. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, pp. 127-128.
23. Lasky, *Hungarian Revolution*, p. 115.
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25. Ibid., p. 126.
26. Ibid., p. 131.
27. Ibid., p. 133.
28. Paul E. Zinner, *Revolution in Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 281.
29. Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970), pp. 417-419. © 1970 by Little, Brown & Co. Used by permission.
30. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 166.
31. Ibid., pp. 163-165.



32. Mikes, *Hungarian Revolution*, p. 136.
33. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, pp. 186-187.
34. Lasky, *Hungarian Revolution*, p. 176.
35. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 188.
36. Ibid., p. 196.
37. Ibid., p. 189.
38. Ibid., p. 193.
39. George Mikes, *A Study in Infamy* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1959), p. 61.
40. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, pp. 214-215.
41. Ibid., p. 215.
42. Ibid., pp. 220-221.
43. Zorza was then, as now, a prescient observer of the Soviet scene. A frequently heard story in Budapest in those days averred that: "When 1 percent of the Hungarian people asked the Soviets for help, they sent ten divisions; when 99 percent of the Hungarian people asked the West for help, they sent their sympathy."
44. Lasky, *Hungarian Revolution*, p. 204.
45. Ibid., p. 207.
46. Ibid., p. 208.
47. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 222.
48. Marton, *Forbidden Sky*, pp. 174-175.
49. General Malinin's shock may well have been genuine; he was soon relieved as Soviet Commander in Chief by General Lashchenko.
50. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 234.
51. Lasky, *Hungarian Revolution*, p. 209.
52. Meray, *Thirteen Days*, p. 237.
53. As a point of interest which may have had impact on Washington's handling

of the Hungarian crisis, the American Legation in Budapest had been without its Chief of Mission, Christian M. Ravndal, for nearly 4 months at the time of the revolution's outbreak.

54. Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Discreet Biography of a Smiling Public Man," Book Review, *The Washington Post*, 4 February 1973. © *The Washington Post*. Used by permission.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Text of the Official Declaration by the Soviet Government Regarding the Matter of Relations Between Socialist States, October 30, 1956.**

The unchangeable foundation of Soviet foreign relations has been and remains a policy of peaceful coexistence, of friendship, and of collaboration with all other states.

The most profound and the clearest expression of this policy is to be found in the relations between the socialist countries. Linked together by the common goal of building a socialist society and by the principles of proletariat internationalism, the countries of the great community of socialist nations can base their relations only on the principles of complete equality of rights, of respect for territorial integrity, of political independence and sovereignty, and of non-interference in the internal affairs of one state by the other. This does not preclude, but on the contrary assumes, a close fraternal collaboration and a mutual assistance between the countries of the socialist community in economic, political and cultural matters.

It was on this foundation that, after World War II and the collapse of fascism, the democratic people's regime leaped ahead. It was on this foundation that the regime was strengthened and that it was enabled to demonstrate its vitality throughout numerous European and Asian countries.

In the course of establishing the new regime and in the course of establishing deep revolutionary changes in socialist relations, there have come to light several difficulties, several unsolved problems, and several downright mistakes, including mistakes in the relations among socialist states. These violations and these mistakes have demeaned the principle of equal rights in socialist interstate relationships.

The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union strongly condemned these violations and errors and decided that the Soviet Union would base its relations with the other socialist countries on the strict Leninist principles of equal rights for the peoples. The Congress proclaimed the need for taking into account the history and the individual peculiarities of each country on its way toward building a new life.

The Soviet Government has systematically applied the historic decisions of the Twentieth Congress in creating the conditions for



strengthening the amity and the cooperation between socialist countries. It has based its application of these decisions on the firm foundation of complete respect for the sovereignty of each socialist state.

As recent events have shown, it is apparently necessary to declare the position of the Soviet Union concerning its relations with the other socialist countries, and, above all, concerning its economic and military relations with such countries.

The Soviet Government is prepared to examine, along with the governments of the other socialist states, the measures that will make possible the further development and reinforcement of economic ties between the socialist countries, in order to remove any possibility of interference with the principles of national sovereignty, of reciprocal interest, and of equality of rights in economic agreements.

This principle must also be extended to cover the question of advisors. It is well known that during the period just past, when the new socialist regime was being formed, the Soviet Union, at the request of the governments of the people's democracies has sent into these countries many specialists, many engineers, and many agronomists and scientists and military advisors. Recently, the Soviet Government has frequently proposed to the socialist states the question of withdrawing those advisors.

Inasmuch as the people's democracies have trained their own personnel, who are now qualified to handle all economic and military matters, the Soviet Government believes that it is necessary to reconsider, together with the other socialist states, the question of whether it is still advantageous to maintain these advisors of the USSR in these countries.

As far as the military domain is concerned, an important basis for relations between the USSR and the people's democracies has been provided by the Warsaw Pact, under which the signatories have made political and military commitments with each other. They have committed themselves, in particular, to take "those concerted measures which are deemed necessary for the reinforcement of their capabilities for protecting the peaceful employment of their people, for guaranteeing the integrity of their frontiers and their territories, and for assuring their defense against any aggression."

It is well known that, under the Warsaw Pact and under agreements

between the governments, Soviet troops are stationed in the republics of Hungary and Romania. In the republic of Poland, Soviet troops are stationed under the terms of the Potsdam Agreement with the other great powers, as well as under the terms of the Warsaw Pact. There are no Soviet troops in the other people's democracies.

In order to insure the mutual security of the socialist countries, the Soviet Government is prepared to review with the other socialist countries signing the Warsaw Pact the question of Soviet troops stationed on the territory of the above-mentioned countries.

In doing so, the Soviet Government proceeds from the principle that the stationing of troops of one member state of the Warsaw Pact on the territory of another state shall be by agreement of all the member states and only with the consent of the state on the territory of which, and on the demand of which, these troops are to be stationed. The Soviet Government believes it is essential to make a declaration regarding the recent events in Hungary. Their development has shown that the workers of Hungary have, after achieving great progress on the basis of the people's democratic order, justifiably raised the questions of the need for eliminating the serious inadequacies of the economic system, of the need for further improving the material well-being of the people, and of the need for furthering the battle against bureaucratic excesses in the state apparatus. However, the forces of reaction and of counter-revolution have quickly joined in this just and progressive movement of the workers, with the aim of using the discontent of the workers to undermine the foundations of the people's democratic system in Hungary and to restore to power the landlords and the capitalists.

The Soviet Government and all the Soviet people deeply regret that these events in Hungary have led to bloodshed.

At the request of the People's Government of Hungary, the Soviet Government agreed to send Soviet military units into Budapest to help the Hungarian People's Army and the Hungarian Government to reestablish order in that city.

Being of the opinion that the continued presence of Soviet units in Hungary could be used as a pretext for further aggravating the situation, the Soviet Government has now given instructions to its military commanders to withdraw their troops from the city of Budapest as soon as the Hungarian Government feels that they can be dispensed with.

At the same time, the Soviet Government is prepared to engage in negotiations with the Hungarian People's Government and the other signatories of the Warsaw Pact regarding the question of the presence of Soviet troops elsewhere on the territory of Hungary.

The defense of socialist gains in the Hungarian People's Government is at the moment the primary and sacred task of the workers, the peasants, the intellectuals, and all the working people of Hungary.

The Soviet Government expresses its conviction that the people of the socialist countries will not allow reactionary forces, whether foreign or domestic, to undermine those foundations of the democratic People's Government which have been won and strengthened by the struggle and sacrifice and work of the people of this country. The people will, it believes, employ all their efforts to eliminate any obstacles in the way of strengthening the democratic foundations, the independence, and the sovereignty of their country. Such actions will, in turn, strengthen the socialist foundations of the economy and the culture of each country and will continue to increase the material well-being and the cultural level of all the workers. The Hungarian people will strengthen the brotherhood and the mutual cause of the socialist countries in order to consolidate the great and peaceful aims of socialism.

☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1978-260-819/3017